

Playing With Collaborative Writing: A Blog Post from Last Summer

We've been exploring the ways in which writers draw upon the [Dispositions of Practice](#) to improve their process and their craft in Studio this week. This morning's crew participated in a collaborative writing activity that led to some meaningful discoveries about what can happen when we step back and let kids think, write, and problem solve together rather than taking over this work ourselves. So often, students enter classrooms and position themselves as empty pitchers in need of a fill. Studio teachers believe that addressing this problem requires shifting their own practice. They long to serve as facilitators rather than directors of learning, which sounds wonderful. Realistically, we've learned it's a bit uncomfortable.

Today, each fellow began by free-writing around one of the Dispositions that they feel they've attended to most this week. Many used their five senses as a lens through which they could define their chosen Disposition with greater and more vivid detail. We stopped for a moment to reflect on word choice and the importance of precision in language use, and then we began writing short descriptive paragraphs about the Dispositions using the ideas captured during free-writing. I had some great things to share about this, and I know that Carol and Kristin, two other teacher-fellows in Session A, did as well. ***It was hard not to share them.***

Each writer then underlined two or three of their most powerful sentences and met with others who focused on the same Disposition to discuss their work. While they chatted, I handed each writer a brightly colored pack of Post-It Notes and asked them to transfer the sentences they underlined to the Notes by placing only ONE WORD from each sentence on each note:



Writers remained in groups with those who wrote around the same Disposition. They moved to floor and mixed their Post Its together, creating a collection of words with which they could begin crafting collaborative poems about the Dispositions. The teachers simply observed the unique process of each group. We didn't advise. We didn't interject. We didn't make it easier (or harder) for them. We simply watched. ***This was difficult.***



At first, one group's poem was more like a paragraph, while another group struggled to put words together fluently. Another group finished their draft with ease and returned to their tables to begin articulating the collaborative process that they used in their journals. As each group finished, they did the same.



All fellows took some time to look at the different Post It Poems that lined the floors of our classroom. They described the unique process that each group used to create their poems, their challenges, and what they hoped to improve. Group members returned to their drafts with ideas about process and product gleaned from the work of other writers. They worked together to revise. ***Teachers said nothing, and they didn't touch the Post Its or the Sharpie markers...even though they were very pretty and seemed to be calling our names. You will note in the photo below that one student chose to use the letter "R" instead of the word "are"...this made me itch, quite honestly. But I didn't say or do anything.***



Their last drafts were substantially different from their earlier versions, and this surprised many of them. Watching this group of very diverse learners and writers connect and collaborate and problem solve as they created and revised these pieces was inspiring. Even though they are still in draft form, they couldn't wait to add them to the Studio blog.

